



east glendalough school

pastoral care policy

Introduction

1. Introduction

Young people today have many difficult issues to deal with, both school related and otherwise, and it is important that appropriate support structures are in place to help them. To that end, a programme of pastoral care has been established in East Glendalough School, in keeping with the School's Christian values and caring ethos.

The aims of the East Glendalough School Pastoral Care Programme are:

- To promote a school that is happy, open and inclusive, with a caring supportive environment
- To foster a strong partnership between parents, teachers, students and all members of the school community
- To recognise and respect the potential of each individual student and to support them as they progress through secondary school
- To develop personal integrity, self-discipline and a positive self-image in individual students
- To develop mutual respect and empathy amongst all members of the school community
- To encourage students to be proactive and caring of others, both in school and society, and in doing so to prepare them for adult life
- To promote positive mental health among our School community
- To offer support and advice to members of our School community when needed

The Board of Management receives updates at its monthly meetings on, among other things, issues relating to the pastoral care, mental health and wellbeing of East Glendalough School students.

2. Pastoral Care Structures

The structures/teachers outlined below work together as a team to operate the programme of pastoral care in the School. In doing so, they are supported by the Board of Management

and the Principal who make provision for pastoral care and who ensure that the Pastoral Care Policy is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is effective and implemented.

- a. Subject Teachers
Subject teachers are familiar with, and support, the School's Pastoral Care policies. They promote a positive teaching and learning environment within the classroom and report concerns to appropriate persons.
- b. Form Teachers
Each class has a Form Teacher assigned to them with a special pastoral role. As well as the specific administrative duties, the Form Teacher encourages and monitors the progress of pupils in their class. The Form Teacher meets the class three times a week and acts as a point of contact, both for subject teachers and for concerned parents.
- c. Year Heads
The School is divided into the Junior School (1st-3rd Year) and the Senior School (4th-6th Year) and each section has a Head of School. These people consult regularly with the Form Teachers to identify pupils with particular problems. They meet with pupils regularly and will contact and meet with parents if and when necessary. Because of the crucial importance of 1st and 5th Year, as well as the difficulties students can sometimes experience making the transition from Primary School and again from junior to senior years, East Glendalough School also has a special Head of First Year, who fulfils a similar role. A Head of 5th year, along with Transition Year Co-ordinators, also form part of this pastoral care team. Heads of Junior School and Senior School co-ordinate with these and respectively take responsibility for 2nd/3rd and 6th Year specifically.
- d. Guidance Counsellor
The school has the services of a full time Guidance Counsellor, Mrs O'Callaghan, who is available for individual consultation and counselling with parents and students throughout the school year. The role of a Guidance Counsellor is to engage in personal, educational and vocational counselling with students throughout their time in School. Mrs O'Callaghan advises students on all aspects of subject choice, third level courses and the world of work and enables each student to identify his/her abilities, interest and talents.
- e. Chaplain
Ms Evans is available to meet students individually and to talk to parents. There is no specific delineation between the services of the Guidance Counsellor and the Chaplain and very often the two teachers may work together on an issue. The reason for having both is to allow students to choose the counsellor and personal style of their preference.
- f. Additional Support Needs Dept and ASD Unit
The Special Educational Needs Dept and Special Needs Assistants will play a large role in the care of certain students in the School, in accordance with the *East Glendalough School Special Educational Needs Policy*.

3. Pastoral Care Procedures

The procedures outlined below describe the programme of pastoral care in the School. The list is not exhaustive and may be added to by review and as the pastoral care team see fit.

- a. First Year Induction

- About six months before they start in the School, incoming First Years are invited to visit the school for an Introductory Evening. This allows students to have a look around the school and meet some of their teachers.
- Then, when the First Years arrive in September, they undertake an Induction afternoon and one other full school day before the other students return to school. This allows them to familiarise themselves with their teachers, lockers, rules, etc and also to find their way around the building.
- b. Mentor Programme
As part of our Pastoral Care Policy we have developed a Mentor Programme. This system links small groups of First Year students (4-5 max) with an older student, usually a prefect, who will look out for them and guide them through their first year in the School.
 - c. Guidance & Counselling
As part of the Pastoral Care programme students can speak to the school Guidance Counsellor or Chaplain about issues which are bothering them. These can be school-related issues such as subject choices and difficulties with exams or more personal matters that may be troubling them.
 - d. Referral
Although some teachers may have completed training in counselling, it is normal practice in East Glendalough School that where, in the opinion of the staff, students require professional mental health services, they will be recommended to seek a GP referral to an accredited counsellor or mental health professional. In such cases, East Glendalough School staff will liaise with and assist the outside agency involved in every practicable way. The School may also refer situations to the HSE, in accordance with *Child Protection* guidelines.
 - e. SPHE
Social, Personal & Health Education enables students to develop as individuals, secure in their sense of self. Students take part in activities which help them to develop mutual support and respect for each other, whilst encouraging them to think constructively and considerately. The SPHE programme also encourages students to develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning and behaviour as well as creating an awareness of their role in society. Junior Cycle Wellbeing, the Friends programme in 2nd Year and the Senior Cycle RSE and Guidance programmes also form part of the School's provision in this area.
 - f. Anti-Bullying Policy
Every student has the right to be able to enjoy school and learn in a safe and welcoming environment. The *East Glendalough School Anti-Bullying Policy* emphasises the importance of a positive and caring attitude towards each other and we believe that our pastoral care programme and the Christian ethos of the school promote a positive environment with respect for all. However, the policy also clearly defines behaviour which is defined as bullying and outlines procedures for reporting such incidents should they arise.
 - g. SEN Support
The staff of the SEN Department (see above) give due regard to the particular pastoral care needs of the students they are dealing with.
 - h. Critical Incident Response
The School will respond to major or tragic incidents in accordance with the *East Glendalough School Critical Incident Management Plan*.
 - i. Contact with Parents
The success of East Glendalough School is based around unusually close and positive liaison with parents which is a noticeable feature of the School. Each year group at Junior and Senior Cycle has a parent-teacher meeting once a year. There are regular

information evenings on aspects of curriculum and school life. Reports are issued at least twice yearly for all students following in-house exams at Christmas and at the end of the school year. However, when there are pastoral concerns that aren't being addressed sufficiently by these mechanisms, there will be ongoing direct contact between teachers and staff. In particular, where issues around low mood, self-harm or suicidal ideation arise, the School will have more formal contact with parents. Specifically, where instances of self-harm come to the attention of the School, the School will recommend a GP visit and will write home. Where suicide is mentioned, the School will contact home directly as a matter of course.

- j. Campaigns and special weeks
Assemblies, non-uniform days, visiting speakers who can deal with issues around bullying, self-esteem, mental health and online safety, along with full themed weeks are used to promote various health and wellbeing initiatives. Some of these, like Health Week and Stand Up week are annual events. However, other issues are dealt with as they arise, and East Glendalough prides itself on this flexibility and responsiveness.
- k. Anonymous student questionnaires: these can be a useful tool which the Pastoral Care team can use to establish information about concerns within a particular class or yeargroup, and are used sparingly but effectively.
- l. Specific, case-by-case protocols and supports may be put in place, and regularly reviewed, to assist student mental health difficulties where diagnosed by or under the care of mental health agencies. Students may be in a position to avail of support classes, access to a quiet room, access to the ASD building and additional support from SNAs as sanctioned by the NCSE.

Reviewed and approved by the

Parents' Association Committee:
Student Council:
Teaching Staff:

Board of Management: